

Gonzalez-Alvarez House ("The Oldest House")
14 St. Francis Street
St. Augustine
St. Johns County
Florida

HABS No. FLA-138

HABS

FLA.

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11.

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MULTIPLE
ADDENDUMS
FOLIO

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. FLA-138

GONZALEZ-ALVAREZ HOUSE ("THE OLDEST HOUSE")

Address: 14 St. Francis Street, St. Augustine, St. Johns
County, Florida.

Present Owner: St. Augustine Historical Society, 22 St. Francis
Street, St. Augustine, Florida.

Present Use: Historical museum.

Statement of
Significance: Early 18th century sections of the Gonzalez-
Alvarez House, make this structure one of the
earliest remaining houses in St. Augustine.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The history of the Gonzalez-Alvarez House was compiled by the St.
Augustine Historical Society in 1962. The combined work of several
authors, it was published under the title, Evolution of the Oldest
House. Several of the chapters are here transcribed in their entirety
(except as indicated):

A. Chapter III, pp. 20-27

"HISTORY OF THE OLDEST HOUSE

by

J. T. Van Campen

.....

"Research has yet failed to reveal exactly by whom and when the
Oldest House was built. Many of St. Augustine's early records, par-
ticularly those dealing with property transfers, may have been de-
stroyed when Moore burned the town in 1702, (1) and later in 1744 when
the home of the Escribano, Don Francisco de Castilla, went up in
flames. (2)

"Footnotes for Section III

History of the Oldest House

1. The Siege of St. Augustine in 1702, Charles W. Arnade, University
of Florida Press, 1959.
2. The Case of Mr. John Gordon with Respect to the title to Certain
Lands in East Florida, London, 1772, (Appendix) Exhibit No. XXII.
Deposition of Joseph de Leon, October 1, 1763. Photostat in St.
Augustine Historical Society Library.

"The first documentary record of the oldest House goes back to 1727. In the Cathedral Parish records for that year, the burial of the infant son of Tomas Gonzalez Hernandez is recorded, including the statement that "he lives near the Convent of St. Francis", (3) the site of which is just across the street from the Oldest House. On the de la Puente map of 1763, a house is shown in this same location and is listed as the property of Tomas Gonzalez Hernandez, who further records prove was still living at that time. The house is described as being of rough masonry. (4)

"The first recorded owner of the Oldest House was a native of Tacaronte, on the Island of Tenerife in the Canaries. He came to St. Augustine in about 1721, at the approximate age of 22, and served for two years as a sailor. (5) In 1723 he married Francesca de Guevara, daughter of Corporal Manuel Guevara. (6) Francesca's family had lived in St. Augustine for three generations, and no doubt had acquired some property. It is possible that the Oldest House was a part of Francesca's dowery.

"Soon after his marriage to Francesca, Tomas enlisted in the garrison of St. Augustine, serving as a fusileer and artilleryman for 36 years until he became ill and was placed on the disabled list. (7) Much of the couple's married life, spent in the Oldest House, was fraught with danger and uncertainty, for during this time the English to the north were constantly threatening St. Augustine. In the summer of 1740, General Oglethorpe of Georgia laid siege to the town, bombarding the Castillo for 28 days from batteries on Anastasia Island, just across the bay. Not all the cannon balls, however, were aimed at the fort, and some came uncomfortably close to the Gonzalez house. This siege also brought near-starvation to the settlement and it was, no doubt, with devout thanksgiving that Francesca received an allotment of rice to feed her hungry family from the cargo of a captured Carolina ship,

"Footnotes for Section III [continued]"

3. Cathedral Parish Records, St. Augustine, Florida: Burials, August 17, 1727, folio 3083. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
4. Key to the Map of San Agustin de Florida, January, 1764, by Juan Joseph Eligio de la Puente. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
5. Tomas Gonzalez Hernandez to the Crown, Havana, September 5, 1773; AGI 86-6-6 folio 61. Stetson Collection. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
6. Cathedral Parish Records, St. Augustine, Florida: Marriages, March 1, 1723, folio 2939. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
7. Tomas Gonzalez Hernandez to the Crown. . . September 5, 1773.

which Governor Montiano's privateer brought into port. (8)

"In 1763, news that Spain had ceded Florida to England must have proved a cruel blow to the family. All residents of St. Augustine were directed to prepare to leave their comfortable homes and seek asylum in some other Spanish territory. They were allowed eighteen months to dispose of their property. Tomas and Francesca reluctantly packed their belongings and prepared to embark for Havana, Cuba.

"Tomas was now past 60 years of age and suffering from asthma. Like many others, he was unable to sell his home at a fair price. When the time came for his departure, he deeded the Oldest House in trust to Juan Jose Eligio de la Puente, who was appointed by the Spanish government to make an inventory of all buildings in the town. The map, which he prepared, dated January 22, 1764, is a basic document listing all property and its ownership in St. Augustine at that time. Lot No. 342, in Square K, is listed as the property of Tomas Gonzalez y Hernandez. (9)

"When he was through with his work, de la Puente conveyed the Oldest House, together with others, to Jesse Fish, an English trader who lived on Anastasia Island. (10) Fish was to sell the houses at the best price possible and remit the proceeds to their former Spanish owners. For the next ten years the Oldest House stood vacant as few English buyers appeared. Finally in 1775, the year the Revolutionary War began, Fish sold the property to an Englishman, Major Joseph Peavett, for the sum of 261 pesos, 1/2 real. (11)

"Peavett had evidently come to St. Augustine soon after the English took over the province, and managed to prosper. His wife was the former widow, Mary Fenwick, nee Evans. (12) Architectural examination indicates that parts of the upper story of the Oldest House and other improvements were made during this period, probably after Peavett purchased it in 1775. The de la Rocque map of 1788 shows these changes. (13)

"Footnotes for Section III [continued]"

8. East Florida Spanish Papers (Manuscript Division Library of Congress) Governor Montiano of Florida to Governor Guemes of Havana, St. Augustine, January 2, 1741. Translation in Collection of the Georgia Historical Society, Vol. VII, Part 1, Siege of St. Augustine, p. 68.
9. Key to the Map of San Agustin, de Florida . . . 1764.
10. Puente's Sale of Houses, July 23, 1764, #159. Papeles de Cuba, Seville, Legajo 372. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library, translated by E. W. Lawson.
11. East Florida Spanish Papers (Manuscript Division Library of Congress) Accounts of Jesse Fish, 1763-1770. Transcript in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
12. Spanish Land Grants in Florida, Historical Records Survey, Tallahassee, 1941, Volume III Confirmed Claims, D-J, p. 127. Deposition of Gabriel W. Perpall.
13. Plan of the City of San Agustin, Florida, 25 April, 1788, Mariano de la Rocque: Block 39, No. 251.

"When Spanish rule returned to Florida in 1783, Peavett was among the Englishmen who chose to remain in St. Augustine. In the Spanish census of 1783-85, he is listed as a native of England who wished to avail himself of Spanish protection. He had a wife, a white servant, and was a planter by occupation. He claimed ownership of over 3,000 acres of land, 57 slaves, 4 horses, 1 cow and 3 calves. He is listed as owning a house and lot in town, which he occupies near the gates of the Barracks (formerly the Convent) (14).

"The Peavetts were living in the Oldest House when Joseph died in 1786, leaving Mary a widow for the second time, but she did not remain so long. Within thirty days of her husband's death she married John Hudson, an Irish soldier and gay blade many years her junior. (15) He had come from Havana to seek his fortune under Spanish dominion. Through her former marriages Mary had accumulated considerable wealth and property, including the Oldest House, and could be termed a rather well-to-do middle-aged widow, but this third marriage proved her undoing.

"John Hudson's extravagance and dissipation soon caused trouble with Spanish authorities. He was somewhat a non-conformist. One of his escapades, that of tearing down notices from the bulletin board in front of the Government house, and showing great disrespect for established authority, resulted in his arrest and confinement in the stocks at the Guard House. Although Mary pleaded for his release, he was transferred to the dungeon at the fort for several days. When he was brought to trial, the eloquence of his attorney, Don Luis Fatio, failed to save him from conviction. He was sentenced to exile from St. Augustine for four years, and forbidden to come within twenty miles of the town. Fortunately he was able to retire to one of his wife's places in the country. (16)

"John Hudson's lack of business acumen, and possibly the general poverty of the times, threw the family deeply into debt, some of which John had contracted before his marriage. They owed more than 3,800 pesos. (17) To satisfy their creditors, Spanish authorities confiscated the Oldest House and put it up for public sale. (18)

"Footnotes for Section III [continued]

14. East Florida Spanish Papers (Manuscript Division Library of Congress), Census Returns, 1783-1785. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
15. Cathedral Parish Records, St. Augustine, Florida; Marriages, December 28, 1786. Typescript in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
16. East Florida Spanish Papers (Manuscript Division Library of Congress) Criminal Causes: Edicts against Don Juan Hudson, 1790. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
17. East Florida Spanish Papers . . . Civil Causes: Executive Decrees Carried out against Don Juan Hudson. Transcript and Translation in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
18. East Florida Spanish Papers . . . Escrituras, April 10, 1790.

"The successful bidder at this sale, held on August 18, 1790, was Geronimo Alvarez. (19) A native of Spain, he came to St. Augustine in 1784 as a hospital employee at a salary of 20 pesos per month and one ration. (20) He took lodgings with a Joseph Pons (Ponce), (21) a Minorcan, and two years later married the 16 year old Antonia Vens, a daughter of Senora Pons by a former marriage. (22) In 1788 they were living in a wooden house, just east of the Oldest House, on Marine Street. (23) Two years later he purchased not only the Oldest House, but also the Tovar house, which adjoins it on the west, for the sum of 942 pesos. (24) He was a baker by trade and evidently did quite well at it. In 1817 and again in 1818, Geronimo mortgaged all three houses as a security bond for fulfilling a contract to furnish the garrison of St. Augustine with bread and sea-biscuit. (25)

"Alvarez was also active in politics and held the position of Alcalde Mayor during the time Spain was briefly under a constitutional form of government. (26) It was largely through his persistence that the monument in St. Augustine's Plaza was erected to commemorate the adoption of this liberal constitution. Coquina from the ruins of the Palacio Episcopal (present site of Trinity Episcopal Church) was used in its construction. (27) At times when there was friction between the Cabildo, or town council, and the governor, and its members were barred from the Government House, their meetings were held at the home of Alvarez - in the Oldest House. (28)

"Footnotes for Section III [continued]"

19. East Florida Spanish Papers . . . Escrituras, April 10, 1790.
20. East Florida, 1783-1785; A File of Documents Assembled and Many of them Translated, by Joseph Byrne Lockey, University of California Press, 1949. List of Employees for the Hospital at St. Augustine, June 1, 1784, pp. 198-199.
21. East Florida Papers . . . Census Returns, 1786.
22. Cathedral Parish Records, . . . Marriages, April 2, 1788, Transcript in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
23. Plan of the City of St. Augustine. . . 1788, Block 39, No. 252.
24. East Florida Spanish Papers . . . Escritures, 1784-1816, April 10, 1790.
25. East Florida Spanish Papers . . . First Book of Properties, (1) November 28, 1817, (2) November 28, 1818.
26. East Florida Spanish Papers . . . Minutes of the Proceedings of the City Council, St. Augustine, East Florida, 1812-1821. Microfilm in St. Augustine Historical Society Library, Transcript and Translation by E. W. Lawson.
27. Minutes . . . August 2, 1813.
28. Minutes. . May 4, 1813; May 10, 1813.

"Alvarez stayed on in St. Augustine after Florida was taken over by the United States in 1821, and no doubt witnessed the change of flags at the fort on July 10th of that year. He lived to a ripe old age and was esteemed as a man of integrity and worth. Instead of leaving a will, he disposed of his properties several years before his death. By a deed, dated November 15, 1839, he transferred the Oldest House and other houses that he owned to his son Antonio. (29)

"Antonio, like his father, became prominent on the local political scene during the second Spanish regime in Florida. After the change of flags in 1821, he continued in public service, and was later appointed Keeper of the Archives by President John Quincy Adams, a position which he held for many years. (30) He also served as mayor of St. Augustine and held other offices.

"In an affidavit signed by Antonio in 1849, he relates the carelessness with which the archives were handled before his appointment. In 1812, he states, while the public archives were being transferred from their depository at the fort to the office of the government secretary, several bundles covering the period prior to 1763, were discarded as it was found that because of their age and dampness at the fort they were ruined and useless. Later they were in the possession of a Mr. Edmund Low, who often carelessly left them lying about. (31) So it is not strange that some of the early documents have disappeared.

"Antonio died in 1866, leaving no will. His widow, the former Eleuteria Sabate, was made administratrix of his estate. In its appraisal and distribution in 1878, the Oldest House, valued at \$2,500, was conveyed to Ella O'Hara Acosta, Antonio's granddaughter. (32) Shortly thereafter Ella died, and her husband, George F. Acosta, as administrator of her estate, sold the Oldest House to a William Duke of New York. (33) This marked the end of its ownership by people of Spanish descent, and the beginning of its period under American ownership.

"Footnotes for Section III [continued] -----

29. St. Johns County Archives, Deed, Geronimo Alvarez to Antonio Alvarez and the heirs of Teresa Llambia, Dec'd. November 9, 1839, recorded in Book O of Deeds, pp. 81/83.
30. Record of 30th Congress, 2nd Session, January 30, 1849, Executive Document No. 21, Report of the Solicitor of the Treasury: Testimony of Antonio Alvarez, P. 90.
31. Ibid.
32. St. Johns County Archives, Order Book 2, p. 346. Estate of Antonio Alvarez, Dec'd. 21 December, 1878.
33. St. Johns County Archives, Deed Book AAA p. 69 Commissioners Deed, May 9, 1882.

"Duke kept the Oldest House only about two years, possibly using it as a winter residence. In 1884, he sold it to Mrs. Mary E. Carver, whose husband, Dr. C.P. Carver, was a prominent local dentist. (34) He, too left his mark on the Oldest House. When the old Presbyterian Church was dismantled in about 1886, Dr. Carver purchased much of the fancy woodwork from the interior of the building, and used it as panelling in the Oldest House, concealing the original coquina walls. He also erected the masonry round tower on the northeast corner of the building, which has since been removed.

"It was Dr. Carver, who first began showing the Oldest House for a fee. The story goes that so many people asked to see it that he instituted a charge in order to discourage them. St. Augustine at the time was enjoying a growing influx of visitors as the result of the completion of a railroad from South Jacksonville to the city, and the opening of luxurious new hotels, such as the San Marco, Ponce de Leon, Alcazar, and Santa Monica. Showplaces and museums were springing up and becoming a lucrative business.

"It was for such purposes that James W. Henderson purchased the Oldest House from Dr. Carver, after the latter's wife died. (35) Mrs. Henderson operated the property as a showplace, installing in it an extensive collection of antiques and curios, and weaving somewhat fanciful tales about its history. It is said that Mrs. Henderson owned the first automobile in St. Augustine, which so frightened the horses and ladies that it was called the 'Red Devil'. Henderson added an apartment to the West end of the Oldest House, since removed. After Mrs. Henderson's death, he sold the Oldest House to the South Beach Alligator Farm and Museum of Marine Curios, managed by George Reddington. (36)

"The St. Augustine Historical Society, founded in 1883, had by this time acquired a growing collection of historical and museum material, which was being housed in the old General Hernandez house on Charlotte Street. The destruction of that building in the great fire of 1914 (37) made it necessary to seek other quarters. After careful study and extensive investigation, the Society purchased the Oldest House on October 3, 1918, from George Reddington, including the collection of antiques and curios that were being exhibited in it. (38) An important consideration in taking this step was that for almost a half century the Oldest House had been regarded by residents as the oldest surviving building in St. Augustine, with the exception of the Castillo.

"Footnotes for Section III [continued]"

34. St. Johns County Archives, Deed Book EE, page 14, Warranty Deed, May 9, 1884.

35. St. Johns County Archives, Deed Book 2, p. 6, Warranty Deed, January 5, 1898.

36. St. Johns County Archives, Deed Book 20, p. 192, Warranty Deed, October 31, 1911.

37. St. Augustine Evening Record, April 2, 1914.

38. St. Johns County Archives, Deed Book 40, pp. 449-50, Warranty Deed, October 31, 1918."

"The Society has since done extensive research and archaeological exploration of the property. Based on these studies, changes were made in the structure, which are further described in this booklet, to restore its original lines. The Oldest House stands today as an excellent example of Spanish colonial life in America, steeped in the mystery, romance and pathos of the centuries past."

B. Chapter V, pp. 107-115.

"OBSERVATIONS ON THE OLDEST HOUSE, ST. AUGUSTINE

by Frederik Gjessing

"On the invitation of the St. Augustine Historical Society, an inspection of the Oldest House was made by the writer October 14-16, 1958.

"The purposes of the inspection were (1) to invite an opinion on the extent the known modern addition to the Oldest House affect its architectural character and appearance, (2) to make specific recommendations of materials and building details to be used in a proposed construction program, and (3) to determine if the existing fabric of the building would reveal original conditions and the physical development of the structure. Brief examinations were made of specific features, and a general understanding of the structure was acquired to augment the information supplied by the St. Augustine Historical Society through pamphlets and measured drawings.

"PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE OLDEST HOUSE

"Illustration 1 [see HABS photocopy] roughly diagrams my idea of the development of the Oldest House from a one-story, one-room-deep building to its present size. Certain elements, such as the hipped roof on fig. 1, are assumptions; and others, like the west chimney, are doubtful. An approximate dating based on available information would be:

- Figure 1 - the original house
- Figure 2 - second story added to original house
- Figure 3 - the house, circa 1788
- Figure 4 - the house in 1886
- Figure 5 - the house about 1900

"ROOF FRAMING

"An examination of the roof framing . . . showed at least four different construction stages.

"1. The framing over the south rooms (between the garage apartment to the west and the porch to the east) is the oldest. On the outer sides of the north rafters there are traces of nailer strips for shingles set with hand-wrought nails. The presence of nailer strips indicates that these rafters once carried the roof surface, and that consequently the second floor over the south rooms predates the rest

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of the second story. The hand-wrought nails imply an early date of construction (most likely prior to 1800), the plate on the east wall is still in place, and from the slant of the notches that held the former rafters in place, it is clear that the roof over the south rooms was originally hipped at both ends. 11-

"2. When a second story was added over the north rooms, the present outside rafters were laid from the ridge of the older roof to the north wall. Only cut nails were noted in this section of the roof. It seems to be the first roof framing in this portion. The nails used would date it not earlier than 1820.

"3. A third change to the roof occurred when the east hip was replaced by a gable, probably to receive the roof of the porch, as the gable would facilitate the framing of the porch roof.

"4. Later still (and at a fairly recent date) the roof was extended over the garage apartment to the west.

"The order of relative dates for the construction of the second story over the north rooms and the construction of the porch is not certain in my mind. The porch may predate the north second story, or both may have been built at the same time. The fact that the earlier second story over the south rooms is framed in wood over a coquina first floor, while the north rooms are constructed in coquina through both floors with no apparent break in the wall construction, inclines me to believe that the entire north side--first and second floors--was built at one time. Judging from the roof, this work was done after 1820.

"(But though the c.1820 rafters seem to be original, both archeology and history agree that the north rooms were here in 1788. Either the 1788 rooms were one-story instead of two-story, or the 1820 rafters are a clean replacement of earlier ones.--John W. Griffin)

"A DOORWAY

"The existing doorway between the southeast and the northeast rooms is flanked by three jambs of an earlier door The jambs also served as wood framing members for the wall. The notches for the doorhead are 6 feet 2 inches above the present floor. There are three sets of pintle marks in each jamb. The original door must have been a double door with a top, bottom and center crosspiece. It appears to have had an overhang on some kind of bracket, judging from the notches in the jamb above the doorhead. An overhang would predate the construction of the north rooms.

"THE STAIRWAY

"The existing stairs are not original. An earlier stair can be traced in the plaster below and to the east of the present ones In fact, there are indications that even the earlier steps were additions.

"The traces of the earlier steps include clear outlines of stairposts, treads, risers and nosing. A new staircase replaced the earlier one, while the first floor door towards the street was partially walled up and replaced by a window.

"CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

"Reference is made to Mr. Carver Harris' memo of September 23 to the writer.

"1. Wood shingles are recommended in preference to concrete shingles for the sake of authenticity. The wood shingles should be treated with a fire retardant such as 'Flaimpruf' or similar product. The additional maintenance required, will in my opinion, be balanced by a more authentic appearance and the fact that the existing roof framing will not have to be altered.

"2. Batten blinds are suggested since there is no evidence at present of wooden grills. In practically all the cases with which I am familiar, wooden grills were used in connection with blinds, shutters or other forms for solid closure except in interior work.

"3. A lime plaster is suggested. It should be mixed of two parts of clean, sharp sand free of salt and organic matter and one part lime putty by volume. The lime can be either quicklime or hydrated lime. The lime putty shall be a stiff mixture of lime and water. It shall be kept moist and allowed to cure for less than a week. The lime putty and sand shall be mixed thoroughly and beaten with shovels to insure a uniform consistency. Only sufficient amount of water shall be added to make it a workable paste. If a quicker-setting stucco is desired, 1/4 bag of white cement can be added for each bucket of lime putty. The cement should be mixed dry with the sand. All surfaces to which the stucco is applied should be thoroughly wetted down before application. The stucco should be allowed to cure slowly and when sufficiently hardened it should be sprayed with water and kept moist. It shall be protected from direct sun and driving rains while drying. The color of the stucco can be controlled by the color of the sand.

"4. The doors and window frames used by the Society in other restorations appear to be correct. This is a detail that can be determined by examination of the original door and window opening now blocked in.

"5. The exit door appeared to have a curved overhead section. Its nature and date, however, are not determinable from the presented evidence and I do not recommend reproducing it at present.

"SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS.

"On the basis of the observations made on the site and the conclusions drawn from the examinations, it is my opinion that the modern additions to the Oldest House adversely affect the appearance of the structure as a colonial Spanish construction, and that the lean-to on the north side of the building and the garage apartment on the west end of it can be removed without hampering future restorations, and should be removed prior to attempting any such work.

"The two-story tower on the northeast corner of the Oldest House poses several questions. It, as the two features mentioned above, is of a recent date. Moreover, it has an architectural character quite alien to the character of a Spanish colonial structure. Its removal however, would necessitate reconstruction of walls and roof, which, although earlier than the tower and more in character with the original structure, may not be part of the original structure. Before a reconstruction of this type is made, it is suggested that a study

be undertaken to establish, if possible, the date of the building and the chronology of the changes and its additions--in short, a construction history; and that a 'cut-off' date be set for the restoration.

"The use and administration of the building will influence the selection and may well indicate the 'cut-off' date. This is a question the St. Augustine Historical Society is in the best position to answer. And should the museum use predicate the preservation of the north row of rooms regardless of their relative age, the problem of the tower becomes a choice between preserving an existing alien feature or destroying it and reconstructing a former but not certainly an original condition. Ignoring all historical considerations the building will undoubtedly have more architectural unity without the tower.

"Based on the very brief examinations made of a few specific details of the Oldest House, my conclusions are that a study of the existing fabric will reveal a reasonably detailed construction history. The major features of the existing structure can undoubtedly be dated relatively from traces; and if related to documentary references (if any are available), may result in a fairly accurate dating of the various changes and the structure. A study of this sort is estimated to take two or three months and will necessitate a limited amount of grubbing and demolition with the consequent expenses and repairs."

C. Chapter VI, pp. 116-17

"THE 1959-1960 RESTORATION WORK

By J. Carver Harris

"On August 11, 1959, the Board of Directors of the St. Augustine Historical Society approved the proposal made by the Planning Division of the Society for restoration of the Oldest House. Specifically, the proposal called for excision of the extensive additions made about 1900: the round tower, the covered walkway, and the west apartment. It would then be necessary to reconstruct small areas of the colonial walls, roof, floors and openings, which were damaged or missing.

"The proposal was a result of the 1954 Development Plan for the Oldest House, a plan which had suggested studies leading to eventual restoration. In due course historical, archeological and architectural examinations had been undertaken. They showed that the complex structure of 1959, through its growth from the original small, single-story house, quite accurately reflects the socio-economic history of St. Augustine up until rather recent times. The studies also made it clear that the several modern additions to the building had obscured its colonial character.

"The Board felt that the restoration project would return the structure accurately to its late-18th-century appearance, thus enhancing its value to the visitor as a meaningful house typical of colonial St. Augustine.

"The actual construction involved the usual techniques--recording, demolition, study, stabilization, and restoration or reconstruction. Before work was undertaken, a complete record of the building was made by means of photography and measured drawings. I have already mentioned the researches in the fields of archeology, architecture,

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and history. The results of these investigations were confirmed and strengthened by additional evidence revealed as the modern features were carefully removed.

"The northeast corner of the house had been cut away many years ago when the tower was constructed. The original foundations of the missing corner were still in place, however, and after the tower was removed we reconstructed the lost corner walls upon the old foundations. Much of the coquina in the tower had come from the house walls; many of these stones were put back once again where they belonged.

"The reconstructed sections received lime plaster on both exterior and interior surfaces, in order to match the adjacent old work as closely as possible. But there was no theatrical 'antiquing' of the new work.

"The work at this corner also required reconstruction of the roof framing, the tabby floor at ground level, and the joists and flooring for the second floor. So far as possible, every care was taken in the new work to use materials, methods, and quality equal to those in the old construction.

"At the west end of the House, demolition of the modern apartment revealed the original west hip of the roof. The rafters were still in place, with a few hand-split shingles attached. It was deemed logical at this time to reshingle the entire roof with fire-resistant, hand-split cedar shingles, in replacement of the modern surfacing.

"Taking down the apartment and its chimney also exposed original painted weather boards. Examination of the successive coats of paint indicated that a low-key green was the authentic color, and this hue was used in the restoration.

"An upstairs doorway, which gave access to the apartment, was returned to its original function as a window.

"All openings in the house required attention. Windows and doors were repaired or replaced as necessary. Most woodwork was in poor condition. Removal of old work often brought forth significant evidence, and in some instances the evidence made it possible to restore openings that had been modified in recent times.

"On the east balcony, the posts and rails were rebuilt.

"Inside the house, one concession was made to visitor safety and convenience. According to evidence in the southeast corner of the main room, there had been an extremely cramped and dangerous stairway. For public use in a house museum, such a stairway is not feasible. A more utilitarian structure was substituted.

From: St. Augustine Historical Society. Evolution of the Oldest House. (Florida State University, Department of Anthropology: "Notes in Anthropology," Vol. 7). Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University, 1962.

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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Gonzalez-Alvarez House, one of the earliest surviving domestic structures in Spanish Florida, was restored in 1959-60 after extensive archival and archaeological research. The restoration returned the house to its presumed late eighteenth-century appearance.
2. Condition of fabric: Restored; well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories: Two stories.
Over-all dimensions: Approximately 56' (five-bay front) x 32'. Rectangular shape.
2. Foundations: Coquina (local shellstone) blocks.
3. Wall construction: Coquina rubble; plastered inside and out. Upper story is part wood framed with clapboarding.
4. Porches: Wooden porch on east elevation, second level; covered loggia at north elevation.
5. Chimneys: Two coquina chimneys.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Unmolded wooden paneled doors of random design, and some are board and batten.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Six-over-six-light, double-hung (upper sash fixed); one eight-over-eight-light double-hung sash, second floor; casement sash lower east elevation.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with wooden shingles.
 - b. Eaves: Narrow open eaves.

C. Description of Interior

1. Plans: Basically this two-story structure had a two-room plan; this has been extensively added to, and could be considered a variation of the "St. Augustine Plan" (rear loggia) discussed by Albert Manucy in his book, The Houses of St. Augustine (St. Augustine, Florida: St. Augustine Historical Society, 1962). The plan of the restored house is illustrated on page 57.

2. Stairways: One stairway of wooden construction (restored).
3. Flooring: First floor, tabby; second floor, 6" wooden planks.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: First floor has plaster walls, and exposed joist ceiling; second floor has walls of plaster and various ceiling finishes of plaster, wood, and wall-board.
5. Doors: Wooden, paneled doors of various types.
6. Trim: Wooden wainscoting on second floor; one wooden paneled room.
7. Hardware: Mostly reproductions--Ponce de Leon door knocker.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Central.

D. Site

1. Orientation: Main axis east-west; faces south on St. Francis Street.
2. Landscaping: Part of an extensive group of structures owned by the St. Augustine Historical Society; the complex is landscaped as whole.

Prepared by Henry C. Edwards, Architect
National Park Service
August 1961.

Addendum
Gonzalez-Alvarez House (The Oldest House)
14 St. Francis Street
St. Augustine
St Johns County
Florida

HABS No. FL-~~135~~
138

HABS
FLA,
55-SAUG,
11-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the efforts and contribution of several people. Ms. Jean Parker Waterbury, Mr. John W. Griffin, Mr. Carver Harris, Ms. Jean Tripedeau-Rosenthal and Mr. Page Edwards of the St. Augustine Historical Society kindly gave us numerous historical sources and information about the "Oldest House," as well as showed us generous hospitality. Special thanks goes to Ms. Wally Martinsons, whose timely contribution of chronological evolution cards saved us an enormous amount of historical research. The "Oldest House" tour guides and staff at the library and museum also deserve our heartfelt thanks for allowing us to climb over and around artifacts and tour groups during the measuring of the "Oldest House." Thanks also goes to Mr. Maurice Williams and Dr. Kathleen Deagan, Florida State Museum archaeologists, and Mr. Ken Barrett, Jr., free lance photographer, who showed us historical maps and photographs depicting the evolution of the "Oldest House." Design student Leslie Lenart's amusing measuring methods also were appreciated.

Special thanks also goes to Mr. F. Blair Reeves, FAIA, recipient of the National Trust 1987 DuPont Crowninshield Award, for allowing us to be in his video biographical documentary when it was filmed at the "Oldest House." Last, but certainly not least, thanks to Professor Herschel Shepard, FAIA, for his enthusiastic support, direction and understanding of architecture students, and to Ms. Susan Tate, University of Florida Interior Design Professor, for allowing problems of this project to interrupt discussions of her design class.

Maynard Ferguson
Jill Foster
Steve Grube
David Krumbholz
Todd Steighner
Kevin Stubbs
Philip Wegman

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Ownership of "The Oldest House"

It is unknown who were the first European people to build on the site of the "Oldest House." The earliest records that indicate ownership of the "Oldest House" can be found in the 1727 Cathedral Parish Records, when Tomás González y Hernández and his wife Francisca buried an infant son.¹ Tomás was born in 1701 in Tenerife in the Canary Islands and came to Florida about 1721. First a sailor, he later joined the St. Augustine garrison as a gunner and a fusilier in the artillery company. In 1758, Tomas retired from active service.² Five years later, Florida became a British colony, and all Spaniards were ordered to leave St. Augustine. The González family boarded a ship for Havana, consigning the "Oldest House" to Juan José Eligio de la Puente for sale.³

De la Puente was appointed during this time by the Spanish government to make an inventory of all the buildings in St. Augustine.⁴ The de la Puente map of 1764 has become an invaluable tool for the early settlement pattern of St. Augustine (see Map No. 1). The map indicates that the "Oldest House" lies within Lot No. 342 in Square K.⁵

De la Puente had to leave St. Augustine in 1764. The House was conveyed to Jesse Fish, an English trader who was to act as property agent and find a new owner for the "Oldest House."⁶ Fish finally sold the "Oldest House" in 1775 to Joseph Peavett for 261 pesos, 17 maravedies.⁷

Joseph Peavett was a paymaster for England's East Florida troops. Joseph and his wife Mary Evans Fenwick still owned the House in 1783 when Florida once again became Spanish.⁸ The Peavetts were allowed to stay in Spanish St. Augustine only if they chose to "publicly profess the Catholic religion."⁹ Since Peavett was already a Catholic, he chose to remain. He died in 1786, leaving the ownership of the "Oldest House" to his wife Mary.¹⁰

That same year, Mary married John Hudson, whose debts resulted in the Spanish authorities confiscating the House and placing it up for public sale.¹¹ In 1790, the House became the property of Gerónimo Alvarez for 942 pesos. Alvarez, a storekeeper and baker, had come to St. Augustine from Asturias, Spain. He married Antonia Venz, and they lived in the House, through the Americanization of Florida, until 1839, when Alvarez divided his property among his children. The House became the property of son Antonio.¹²

Antonio Alvarez was active in politics until his death in 1866. His wife Eleuteria was made administratrix of his estate, until the House was conveyed to their granddaughter Ella O'Hara Acosta in 1878.¹³ Upon her death in 1882, the House was sold for \$2,000 to William Duke of New York, the first of the northern newcomers to own the "Oldest House."¹⁴

Duke owned the House for only two years. In 1884, it was sold to Mary E. Carver, the wife of a local dentist, for \$3,000.¹⁵ The Carvers were the first to open the House to the public. When Mary Carver died in 1893, Dr. Carver owned the House until 1898, when it was sold to a local attorney, J.W. Henderson, for \$10,000.¹⁶

The South Beach Alligator Farm and Museum of Marine Curios bought the "Oldest House" and adjacent property from Henderson in 1911 for \$8,500.¹⁷ They, in turn, sold the House to the present owners, the St. Augustine Historical Society, in 1918 for \$15,000.

ENDNOTES FOR SECTION I:

GONZALEZ-ALVAREZ HOUSE
(The Oldest House)
HABS No. FL-138
Page 18

- 1 Cathedral Parish Records. St. Augustine, Florida: Burials. August 17, 1727, folio 3083. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library.
- 2 Waterbury, Jean Parker. 1984. "The Oldest House:" Its site and its occupants 1650(?) to the present. St. Augustine, Florida: St. Augustine Historical Society.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Gjessing, Frederik C. et al. 1962. Evolution of the Oldest House. Volume 7 of Notes in anthropology. Tallahassee: Department of Anthropology, Florida State University.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Waterbury.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid., p. 10.
- 10 Gjessing.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Waterbury.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Gjessing.
- 15 Waterbury.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.

The earliest evidence of occupation on the site of the "Oldest House" exists in the form of postholes to a structure built of wood and palm thatch, dating to about 1650-1660.¹ This structure was burned and rebuilt of the same flammable material several times, only to be burned for the last time in 1702 when St. Augustine was under siege by the English.

Sometime between 1702 and 1720, the structure was rebuilt with coquina walls. Rectangular in shape, the one story house had an eastern entrance, a flat roof surmounted by a parapet, and an interior wall dividing it into two rooms. Tabby floors covered the earlier refuse pits and post holes. On the exterior, two, possibly three, small rooms separated by passageways to the yard were constructed with roofs of thatch or wood on the north side of the House, and a wooden structure was built over the eastern entrance that corresponds in location with Room 101. This eastern structure was rebuilt with either coquina, tabby, and/or wood sometime between 1763 and 1788, when it was destroyed (see Map No. 1 and 2).²

With the arrival of the Peavetts in 1775, the House underwent major alterations.³ A fireplace was installed in Room 102, and glass window panes were added. A second story was added over the southern rooms (Rooms 102 and 103), and the new roof was hipped at both ends.

Evidence indicates that the second floor north rooms were added at a later date, possibly sometime after 1820.⁴ Nailer strips for shingles on the outer sides of the north rafters of the ceiling of the first floor Room 103 indicate that these rafters once carried the roof surface, and that the second floor southern rooms pre-date the second floor northern rooms. In addition, only cut nails are found in the present outside rafters over the north rooms. It has also been noted that the earlier second story southern rooms are framed in wood over a coquina first floor, while the north rooms are constructed in coquina through both floors with no apparent break in the wall construction, indicating that the entire north side-- first and second floors-- was built at one time. However, the 1788 de la Rocque map indicates that the north rooms were here during this year (see Map No. 2). Either the 1788 north rooms were one-story instead of two-story, or the 1820 rafters are a clean replacement of earlier ones.⁵

There is evidence that this early House had an entrance leading from Room 102 to the street. A pattern on the interior south wall of this room indicates that there was once a door at the base of an early, steep stairway. This stairway was removed and replaced by one that extended past the door. The door was then converted to a window. The earliest drawing of the "Oldest House" reveals that the doorway existed around 1867 and was gone by ca. 1875 (see Photo No. 1 and 3).

There is also evidence that a kitchen structure was adjacent to the north side of the House, connected only by a roof. The 1788 de la Rocque map shows no such structure; however, the 1893 Sanborn Company map does

(Map No. 2 and 3). In addition, an early photograph dating to about 1890-1892 depicts a structure covered with latticework (Photo No. 4).

The years 1886 to 1898 marked the second era of major alterations to the House.⁶ Dark wood paneling was installed on the downstairs ceiling and coquina walls. Low paneling was added to the north upstairs rooms (Room 202 and 203), and car-siding paneling was installed in the northwest upstairs room (Room 204). It is possible the tea-tray ceiling was also installed in Room 202 during this time. On the exterior, shed dormers were added over the first story southern doorways and windows. A sheltered east entrance with a balcony was constructed as Room 101, and a fireplace was added to the main downstairs room (Room 103) (see Photo No. 4 and 5). Sometime around 1892, a two-story tower ornamented with conch shells was built at the northeast corner of the House, and fake dormers were placed on the south slope of the roof (see Photo No. 6-8).

Alterations done during 1898 further changed the shape of the "Oldest House."⁷ An annex was added to the west end of the House. The first floor was used as a garage and the second floor was an apartment (see Photo No. 9).

Demolition and replacement of certain elements of the House began when the St. Augustine Historical Society became owners in 1918 (see Photo No. 11-26).⁸ The roof dormers and wooden shingles were removed and replaced first with asbestos cement roofing, and later with wooden shingles.⁹ The interior paneling that was installed in 1886 was removed from the walls and ceiling.¹⁰ The fireplace in Room 103 was removed, along with the garage and apartment annex in 1959. A window on the second floor that had been converted to a door for ingress to the annex was restored to its original function.¹¹ A window in the downstairs Room 105 was removed, along with the tower.

The kitchen structure that was adjacent to the north side of the House disappeared sometime around 1924. Photo No. 14, dating to ca. 1924 shows the structure, but Photo No. 17, dating to 1928-1959 indicates that the structure is gone. In addition, the 1924 Sanborn Company map no longer shows the existence of the adjacent structure (Map No. 5).

Construction and reconstruction was necessary in a few portions of the House. The eastern balcony posts and rails were rebuilt. Four new outside doors were built for use on the first floor, along with batten blinds for the windows. The walls, roof framing, tabby floor, joists and flooring of the second floor were reconstructed after removal of the tower.

Maintenance and preservation were also needed. New water pipes were laid, broken windows were replaced, and window frames in the main room were removed and reinstalled securely.¹³ Doors were squared and reinforced, and walls were stabilized, replastered, and repainted. Tabby floors were replaced, and second floor wooden floors were re-laid. Gutters were replaced, the wiring was cleaned up, and a cooling and

heating system and sprinkler system were installed. (However, the cooling and heating system was removed in 1987.) Insulation of the House was also installed.

Today, the St. Augustine Historical Society continues to maintain and preserve the "Oldest House" as one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city (see Photo No. 27-30).

ENDNOTES FOR SECTION II:

GONZALEZ-ALVAREZ HOUSE
(The Oldest House)
HABS No. FL-138
Page 22

- 1 Gjessing, Frederik C. et al. 1962. Evolution of the Oldest House.
Volume 7 in Notes in anthropology. Tallahassee, FL: Department of
Anthropology, Florida State University.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid, p. 107.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid, p. 108.
- 6 Waterbury, Jean Parker. 1984. "The Oldest House:" Its site and
its occupants 1650(?) to the present. St. Augustine: St. Augustine
Historical Society.
- 7 Gjessing.
- 8 Waterbury.
- 9 Gjessing.
- 10 Waterbury.
- 11 Gjessing.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.

OWNERS

FIRST SPANISH PERIOD (1513-1763):

1727-1763: Tomás González y Hernández is recorded in the Cathedral Parish Records as living in the "Oldest House" (Gjessing, 20). González served as a fusileer and artilleryman in the garrison of St. Augustine.

BRITISH PERIOD (1763-1783):

1763-1764: House was deeded to Juan José Elígio de la Puente, who was appointed by the Spanish government to make an inventory of all buildings in St. Augustine. The 1764 de la Puente map indicates the House to be Lot No. 342 in Square K (Gjessing, 21).

1764-1775: de la Puente conveyed the House to Jesse Fish, an English trader who was to sell the house for González (Gjessing, 21; Papeles de Cuba).

SPANISH PERIOD (1783-1819):

1775-1790: House sold to Major Joseph Peavett, an Englishman (Gjessing, 21). Upon his death, the widow Mary married John Hudson, whose debts resulted in the Spanish authorities confiscating the House and placing it up for public sale (Gjessing, 22; Papeles de Cuba; East Florida Spanish Papers 1763).

AMERICAN ACQUISITION AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PERIOD (1819-1845):

1790-1839: Geronimo Alvarez, who was politically active, bought the House (Gjessing, 22; East Florida Spanish Papers 1790; St. Johns County Archives 1839).

STATEHOOD AND PRE-CIVIL WAR PERIOD (1845-1860), AND CIVIL WAR PERIOD (1860-1865):

1839-1866: House was deeded over to the son, Antonio Alvarez who was also politically active (Gjessing, 23).

RECONSTRUCTION (1865-1879):

1866-1878: Wife of Antonio Alvarez, Eleuteria, was made administratrix of the estate (Gjessing, 23; St. Johns County Archives 1878).

POST-CONSTRUCTION (1879-1898):

- 1878-1882: House was conveyed to the granddaughter of Antonio Alvarez, Ella O'Hara Acosta (Gjessing, 23; St. Johns County Archives 1882).
- 1882-1884: House sold to William Duke of New York (Gjessing, 23; St. Johns County Archives 1882).
- 1884-1898: House sold to Mrs. Mary E. Carver, wife of dentist Dr. C.P. Carver. Upon her death in 1893, the House belonged to her husband (Gjessing, 23; St. Johns County Archives 1884).

SPANISH AMERICAN WAR (1898-1916):

- 1898-1911: House was sold to James W. Henderson (Gjessing, 23; St. Johns County Archives 1898).

WORLD WAR I AND AFTERMATH (1916-1920):

- 1911-1918: House was sold to South Beach Alligator Farm and Museum of Marine Curios, managed by George Reddington (Gjessing, 24; St. Johns County Archives 1911).

BOOM TIMES (1920-1929):

- 1918-present: House sold to St. Augustine Historical Society (Gjessing, 24; St. Johns County Archives 1918).

EVOLUTION OF "THE OLDEST HOUSE"

FIRST SPANISH PERIOD (1513-1763):

ca. 1650-1660-- Postholes: various postholes have been discovered indicating that a wooden structure formerly was located on the same site as the present building (Gjessing, p. 85, 102).

1680-1720-- Structure: a wooden structure was built at the far eastern portion of the house (Room 101) (Gjessing, 51).

1702-- Structure: Wooden structure was burned (Gjessing, 36).

1702-1720-- Walls: East, north and south masonry/coquina walls of Room 104 was built dirt midden floor (Gjessing, 70).

1702-1720-- Walls: North, west and south masonry/coquina walls of Room 105 were built (Gjessing, 70).

+1720-- Walls: West masonry/coquina wall of Room 104 was built (Gjessing, 70).

BRITISH PERIOD (1763-1783):

1763-1783-- Walls: North and west masonry/coquina walls to Room 106 were added (Gjessing, 71).

1763-1788-- Walls: masonry walls (either coquina, tabby, and/or wood) were built in the eastern wooden structure (Room 101) (Gjessing, 51).

1775+ to 1788?-- Second Floor: A second story was added (over Rooms 102 and 103). It is unknown whether the three upstairs rooms on the north were added at this time (Waterbury, 9; Gjessing, 21).

Nailer strips (for shingles set with hand-wrought nails) on the outer sides of the north rafters of ceiling of Room 103 indicate that these rafters once carried the roof surface, and that the second floor over the south rooms pre-dated the rest of the second story (Gjessing, 107).

The roof over the south rooms was originally hipped at both ends (Gjessing, 108).

+1775?-- Fireplace: A fireplace was installed in Room 102 (Waterbury 9).

?-- Windows: Glass panes were added in the windows (Waterbury, 9)

SPANISH PERIOD (1783-1819):

- +1788-- Structure: Eastern masonry structure (Room 101) was destroyed (Gjessing, 51).

AMERICAN ACQUISITION AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PERIOD (1819-1845):

- +1820-- Roof: when the second story was added over the north rooms, the present outside rafters were laid from the ridge of the older roof to the north wall. Only cut nails were noted in this section of the roof. It seems to be the first roof framing in this portion. The nails used would date it not earlier than 1820 (Gjessing, 108).
- +1820-- Second story: the earlier second story over the south rooms is framed in wood over a coquina first floor, while the north rooms are constructed in coquina through both floors with no apparent break in the wall construction indicating that the entire north side-- first and second floors-- was built at one time. However, the 1788 map indicates that the north rooms were here during this year. Either the 1788 rooms were one-story instead of two-story, or the 1820 rafters are a clean replacement of earlier ones (Gjessing, 108).

STATEHOOD AND PRE-CIVIL WAR PERIOD (1845-1860), AND CIVIL WAR PERIOD (1860-1865):

RECONSTRUCTION (1865-1879):

POST-CONSTRUCTION (1879-1898):

- pre-1867-- Balcony: A balcony was constructed over the sheltered east entrance (Waterbury, 9).
- +1886-- Ceilings: dark wood paneling salvaged from the old Presbyterian church were installed on the downstairs ceiling (Waterbury, 24).
- +1886-- Ceiling: Tea-tray ceiling on second floor Room 202 installed?
- +1886-- Walls: dark wood paneling salvaged from the old Presbyterian church were installed on the downstairs coquina walls (Waterbury, 24).

- +1886--Walls: Low panelling was added to the northeast room upstairs.
Car-siding panelling was installed in the northwest room upstairs (Waterbury, 24).
- 1886?-- Structure: Eastern room (Room 101) was constructed (Gjessing, 51).
- +1886-- Dormers: Fake dormers were placed on the south slope of the roof (Waterbury, 24).
- +1886?-- Tower: a two-story tower was constructed at the northeast corner of the House (Waterbury, 24).
- ca. 1890--Fireplace: a fireplace was added to Room 103. The fireplace was not bound to the wall, and was constructed without any foundation of footing (Gjessing, 82).

SPANISH AMERICAN WAR (1898-1916):

- 1898-1899-- Annex: A two story addition on the west end of the House was built; the first floor was used as a garage and the second floor was an apartment (Waterbury, 26; Gjessing, 82)

WORLD WAR I AND AFTERMATH (1916-1920):

BOOM TIMES (1920-1929):

- 1918-1958?-- Dormers: removed (Gjessing, 118).
- 1918-1958?-- Roof: removed wooden shingles and replaced with asbestos cement roofing (Gjessing, 118).
- 1925-- Walls: Panelling installed in 1886 was removed (Waterbury, 29; St. Augustine Evening Record 1925).
- 1925-- Ceilings: Panelling installed in 1886 was removed (Waterbury, 29).
- 1928-- Roof: repairs discussed; put on asbestos shingles (Minutes 1928).

DEPRESSION AND NEW DEAL (1929-1940):

- 1934-- Pipes: new water pipes were laid (Minute Book 1932-1949).
- 1934-- Windows: broken window panes were replaced (Minute Book 1932-1949).
- 1940-- Door: a door was installed at the east entrance (Minutes 1940).

WORLD WAR II AND AFTERMATH (1941-1950):

- 1949-- Walls: Second story rooms were repainted using the base color as color guide. Replastering was done where necessary (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Walls: All walls in Room 103 were replastered. Old plaster was removed beforehand. In the south wall of main room, a 6 inch angle beam running entire length of wall supporting floor joists of second story was visible. East and west ends of angle iron beam were embedded in the east and west walls. In addition, an angle beam is supported by six upright I beams imbedded in coquina and plastered over. The I beams have a metal plate on the ground end to support weight. The south wall is secured to the uprights to prevent the buckling of the wall (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Walls: Tower bedroom was painted Williamsburg blue (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Walls: downstairs north room walls were cleaned and plastered (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Balcony: Old roofing of balcony porch was removed and re-roofed with a built up asphalt paper and brushed with hot asphalt. The top layer was protected with crushed stone (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Gutters: Copper gutters replaced old galvanized gutters on the entire house (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Wiring: Wiring was cleaned up (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Pipes: Excess pipes were removed (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Windows: a window in the downstairs Room 105 was removed (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Windows: window frames in Room 103 were removed and reinstalled securely (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Blind: a wooden shutter blind was installed in the downstairs north room (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Doors: a doorway in the downstairs Room 105 was squared and reinforced (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Fireplace: in Room 103 was repaired and made safe for actual use (SAHS Folder 1949).
- 1949-- Ceiling: Rotten ceiling boards in the tower bedroom were replaced (SAHS Folder 1949).

MODERN (1951-present):

- 1951-- Sprinklers: A sprinkler system was installed by the Moore Pipe and Sprinkler Company of Jacksonville (Minute Book 1949-1958).
- 1954-- Cooling and Heating System: installed (Gjessing, 31).
- 1954-- Roof: Tower roof went under repair. A search is underway to find secondhand roof tile (SAHS Office Memorandum 1954).
- 1959-- Balcony: Posts and rails were rebuilt (Gjessing, 117).
- 1959-- Fireplace: The fireplace on the west wall of Room 103 was removed (Minute Book 1959-1969(b); Gjessing, 117; SAHS Folder 1959).
- 1959-- Annex: The west addition was removed (Waterbury, 29).
- 1959-- Windows: An upstairs doorway, which gave access to the apartment, was returned to its original function as a window (Gjessing, 117).
- 1959-- Roof: wooden shingles from Colonial Hand Split Shingles, Inc. were put on the roof (SAHS Folder 1959). The wooden shingles replaced modern asbestos cement shingles that lay over three previous roof coverings. A 90-pound slate roll roofing was applied prior to laying the shingles (Gjessing, 125).
- 1959-- Stairway: a new stairway was constructed that met safety requirements (Gjessing, 117).
- 1959-- Doors: An upstairs doorway, which gave access to the apartment, was returned to its original function as a window (Gjessing, 117).
- 1959-- Tower: removed (Waterbury, 29; Gjessing, 116).
- 1959-- Tower: walls, roof framing, tabby floor, joists and flooring of the second floor were reconstructed after removal of tower (Gjessing, 117).
- 1960-- Floors: sections of tabby floor were replaced where necessary. The second floor wood floors were re-laid (Minute Book 1959-1960).
- 1960-- Doors: four new outside doors of Spanish design and construction were built for use on the first floor (Minute Book 1959-1960(a)).
- 1960-- Windows: Batten blinds were built and installed (Minute Book 1959-1960).

- 1960-- Windows: Sixteen window frames were fabricated and installed.
All window sashes were re-glazed and painted (Minute Book 1959-1969(a)).
- 1960-- Walls: Exterior walls received new paint (SAHS Folder 1959).
Masonry walls were stabilized (Minute Book 1959-1969(a)).
- 1961-- Walls: South exterior wall is stabilized and bare coquina is covered (Minutes 1961).
- 1972-- Walls: Walls of Oldest House exit were rebuilt. The interior south wall of the main room was rebuilt. Ancient brick wall east of House was repointed (Minute Book 1969-1974).
- 1973-- Walls: Second story interior walls were repainted (Minute Book 1969-1984).
- 1975-- Walls : Second story exterior walls were painted (Minute Book 1969-1984).
- 1984-- Doors: a new door for the street side of the House was installed and constructed from cyprus, exactly reproducing the existing door (Edwards Letter, 1984).
- 1986-- Walls: Exterior painting of the House was begun (SAHS Director's Report 1986).
- 1986-- Attic: Insulation (R-19 Batting) was installed by American Insulating Company in the attic (SAHS Office Memorandum 1986).
- 1986-- Shutters: shutters made of swamp cypress were installed (SAHS Folder 1986; Minutes 1986).
- 1987-- Cooling and Heating System: system was removed with boiler (Edwards 1987).

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- Minutes. 1928. St. Augustine Historical Society AC-1, Box 1. October 23, 1928.
- Minutes. 1940. St. Augustine Historical Society AC-1, Box 1. July 25, 1940.
- Minutes. 1961. St. Augustine Historical Society AC-1, Box 1. October 10, 1961.
- Minutes. 1986. Staff meeting. March 5, 1986.

GONZALEZ-ALVAREZ HOUSE
(The Oldest House)
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Papeles de Cuba, Seville, Legajo 372. Puente's Sale of H^Bages 32 July 23, 1764, #159. Photostat in St. Augustine Historical Society Library, translated by E.W. Lawson.

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St. Augustine Historical Society (SAHS) Director's Report. July 28, 1986.

St. Augustine Historical Society (SAHS) Folder. 1949. Old House Repairs.

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St. Johns County Archives. 1882. Deed Book AAA, p. 69. Commissioners Deed.

St. Johns County Archives. 1884. Deed Book EE, p. 14. Warranty Deed.

St. Johns County Archives. 1898. Deed Book 2, p. 6. Warranty Deed.

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General Bibliography on "The Oldest House"

GONZALEZ-ALVAREZ HOUSE
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Addendum to
(The Oldest House) Gonzalez-Alvarez House
14 St. Francis Street
St. Augustine
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